



The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880

Louise L. Stevenson

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In *The Victorian Homefront*, Louise L. Stevenson offers a concise and fascinating portrait of the intellectual lives of ordinary Americans from the Civil War through Reconstruction. She begins where any Victorian would: in the parlor, with an analysis of the material trappings of middle-class self-improvement.

From parlor tables and reading chairs, albums and stereoscopes, and houseplants and fancywork, she moves to the books and reading activities that the parlor hosted and encouraged, and then outward to public institutions of learning, both informal and formal. Stevenson constructs a convincing framework for understanding the intellectual aspirations and activities of middle-class women, children, former slaves, African-American college students, and others in the context of the goals of the nineteenth-century literary and intellectual elite.

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